



Hyphen 50

Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux
association sans but lucratif | autumn 2012



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The image of allotments

Allan Rees,
Chairman of the English allotment society



ALLAN REES

The changing times of the UK's allotments: from whippets to Boden

My allotment is my saviour. It's the place I go to grow my vegetables, clear my head and breathe in the cold Welsh air. I have been gardening for over 40 years and in that time I have seen many changes in the allotment movement. When I first got my plot, allotment gardening was something the men folk did to escape the pressure of work and home – we were often referred to as the flat cap brigade with whippets and our sites would look like 'shanty towns with leeks' but to the plot holder they were refuges where you could feel the earth and take pride in your achievements.

Today I see many different types of people gardening the plots around me; the young and the old, men and women and even whole families together. The sheds might have changed to resemble offerings from the B&Q catalogue and the wellingtons are now designed by Hunter or Boden*, but the reason people garden hasn't changed at all; they still want fresh food to eat and a place to go which provides space from their busy lives.

Our Society, of which I am Chairman, has been in existence in one guise or

another since 1930. Our roots go back even further and are entwined with the 'labouring poor', the war effort and the trade union movement. We should be proud of all we have achieved in those 80 years but I now feel it is time to look forwards. The world has changed beyond belief since the days of Lord Bledisloe, the Rt. Hon Acland and GW Giles, all eminent players in our allotment history. For too many years we have stayed still, treading water and allowing the grass to grow – but as the number of people on allotment waiting lists continues to increase and the call for more plots is unabated, we must take this opportunity to celebrate our past, learn our lessons and embrace the world we now live in, to ensure we are relevant to today's gardeners – all of them, regardless of their welly type!

Earlier this year the Society embarked on its first ever strategic review; a process we are half way through. Come January we will have a new 12 month business plan, giving us a direction and purpose. We have just unveiled a new website, a new look magazine and simplified our name to The National Allotment Society. We are determined to stake our claim in the gardening world and hold our own in this competitive market. Our members are our lifeblood and to them we are

grateful for their support, so come the end of the summer, a new membership package will be rolled out offering them discounts on the products they want.

For some, this kind of change is daunting and unsettling – it worries them that we'll be forsaking our past, spending money which should be saved for a rainy day and deviating from our everyday business. But our business is to support allotment gardeners and ensure allotments exist for tomorrow's generation. Our forefathers changed with the times, flexing to fit with the social models of the day (evident from the number of name changes the Society has had in 80 years, six, as well as addresses, three) and in this respect we are honouring their spirit and drive.

Allotment gardening will have a place in tomorrow's world and we'll be there too – because as we know the reason people want allotments rarely changes, it just the wrapping it comes in which does, and that is no bad thing.

*B&Q is a UK garden centre chain. Boden and Hunter are both UK clothing brands. They represent an affluent lifestyle which celebrates the outdoors and best of British.

Decision protocol of the general assembly held in Zürich on 23rd August, 2012

Were present: the federations of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great-Britain, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and Switzerland

Were absent: the federations of Finland, Norway, Slovakia and Sweden

- 1) The agenda is completed and then adopted with unanimity.
- 2) The reports of the general assembly held in Luxembourg are adopted with unanimity after one comment.
- 3) C. ZIJDEVELD informs the delegates about his visits to the national federations and the necessary European lobbying.
- 4) The general assembly confirms the cooptation of N. FRANKE as member of the executive board until March 2013 to finish A. FRIEDRICH's mandate.
- 5) On proposal of the executive board the general assembly decides to give the diploma for an ecological gardening to the association Bern South-West and to the association Wipkingen site Käferberg.
- 6) On proposal of the executive board the general assembly decides to give the diploma for social activities to the allotment garden federation of Geneva and to the association of Bern East.
- 7) M. WEIRICH informs the delegates that according to the decision taken by the general assembly in 2008, the affiliation fees for 2013 will be increased by 2.5 %.
- 8) It is decided that the federations will create a Powerpoint presentation or film concerning their federation for 2014.
- 9) The executive board submits to the general assembly the draft project for a charter for the International Office prepared by A. FRIEDRICH. The general assembly decides after discussions that the national federations should send their remarks to the secretary general before 1st November.
- 10) The executive board submits to the general assembly the summary prepared by M. WEIRICH on the discussions and proposals made in March concerning the problem of the loss of members. The general assembly decides to contact the Finnish federation in order to see if it wishes more information or further discussions.
- 11) S. WOHATSCHEK presents the draft layout for a new Office home-page. This draft can be seen under <http://www.kleingaertner.at/officeneu/>. The missing texts, updates and photos have to be sent to the general secretariat as quickly as possible.
- 12) E. KONDRACKI informs on the situation in Poland following the decision of the Constitutional Court and asks that the Office, together with the federations, send an open letter to the Polish authorities.

After some amendments the proposed draft letter is officially signed by the Office and the federations.

Conclusions of the study session

Introduction

The congress subject for 2014 will be "Focus on allotment gardens".

This subject will be prepared both by the study session in Zürich and the seminar in Berlin.

In Zürich we wanted to find out how the allotment movement is perceived by politicians, authorities and citizens in order to bridge the gap between the perception and what the image should be.

The aim of the seminar in Berlin is to find answers to the questions formulated in Zürich.

In Utrecht we should draw conclusions and come up with a strategy for the future.

Here follow the results of the discussions in Zürich drawn by the general analyst Ton.THUIS.

Summary of the workshops and a preview to 2013

Over the past few days you have all worked very hard. We would like to compliment you on your efforts. Having enjoyed two fascinating introductions on Friday morning, intensive discussion followed in the afternoon, headed by S. WOHATSCHK and A. REES about the subject: Does the image we have of ourselves correspond with the image in the public opinion? And this morning about the subject "What value does a positive image have to the general public?" headed by P. PASCHKE and H. BONNNA-VAUD.



Assisted by their secretaries, the workshop leaders will be producing written reports. Together with our German and Swiss colleagues, we will then analyse, evaluate and subsequently make use of the results of the workshops in preparing the seminar in Berlin in two thousand and thirteen (2013).

The questions that emerged from the four workshops are:

Workshop Sylvia WOHATSCHK:

Question 1: Is our public relation capable to make politicians see us and make that our point of view is being recognised in decision making?

Question 2: How can we open our sites so our efforts and achievements

are seen and valued?

Question 3: Which instruments can help us to overcome the gap between self-perception and how we are seen by others and to improve our image?

Workshop Allan REES:

Question 1: What can we do to make the public and politicians realise what an allotment is and what its benefits are?

Question 2: How can we convince our members about the importance of working to change our image and communicate with each other about it?

Question 3: How can we obtain funding for action research and good practice research?

Workshop Peter PASCHKE:

Question 1: Should all allotment garden associations open up to society?

Question 2: How important is it to make our projects and efforts better known to the public?

Question 3: Is it relevant to bring forward these efforts?

Workshop Hervé BONNAVAUD:

Question 1: How can we express a positive image to other nations who are not members, the media, politicians and general publics?

Question 2: Under what name should the International Office promote itself and by what means for example Twitter and Facebook.

It is up to us to get to work on these questions.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my particular gratitude to the workshop leaders Sylvia WOHATSCHKEK, Allan REES, Peter PASCHKE and Hervé BONNAVAUD.

In preparation for the international meeting in Berlin, we would very much like to receive any existing promotional material you may have. How do you currently draw public attention to the hobby of allotment gardening? What resources do you use? If you have any such material, please could you send copies of it to us before the first of November two thousand and twelve? You will get a card with our address details.

I hope that like myself you will tomorrow be returning home with a positive

feeling, once again full of expectation for the Berlin meeting. On behalf of the Swiss and German federations, I would like to thank you now for your contributions.

We are always keen to receive any suggestions for further improving our approach. Please do not hesitate to send any such suggestions to us. If you wish to be kept up to date on preparations for the meetings in two thousand and thirteen and two thousand and fourteen, make sure you regularly consult the website [Utrecht 2014.org](http://Utrecht2014.org)

Finally I hope you all have a very enjoyable afternoon, and I look forward to seeing you again next year.

Retrospective in pictures from the study session and the European Day of the Garden



Study session in Zürich



W. SCHAFFNER opens the study session



Work in the plenary sessions



Work in the workshops



Workshop leaders after having accomplished their task



C. ZIJDEVELD, Office President signs the open letter to the Polish authorities



The representatives of the national federations have unanimously accepted the open letter to the Polish authorities



Musical entertainment



Allotment garden association Wipkingen site Käferberg



The bushes of Witch hazels are being planted



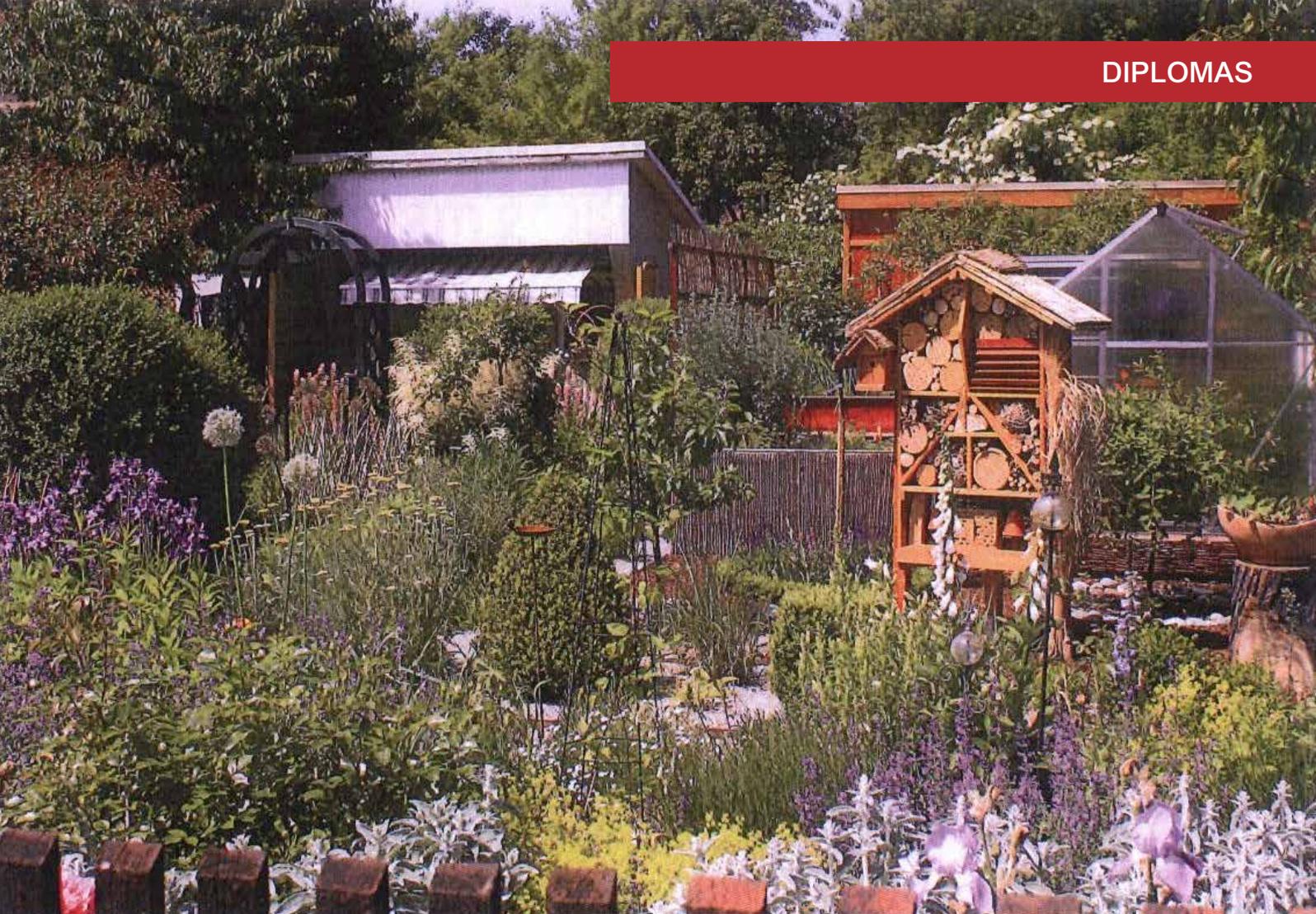
Memorial plaque



Awarding of diplomas



Questions and answers



Germany: The Seilbahn allotment garden association received the Office diploma for ecological gardening.

The Seilbahn allotment garden association is an association which very actively supports nature and people. It has existed since 1919 and cultivates an area of 7.8 hectares. There you can find 199 individual plots as well as several communal areas.

The association's land classification in accordance with the town develop-

ment plan ensures that the allotment garden site is legally protected and its future development is guaranteed by the allotment garden development plan of the town of Leipzig. The site is open all year long for the people of Leipzig to come here to relax and go for a walk. The attractive paths bordered by flowers and bushes make the Seilbahn association a local rec-

reation area, which can easily be reached by public transport. As well as the nicely laid out plots, the aviary is a highlight of the site's features.

Two playgrounds for children and well laid out open areas are the reason why the site has become a small paradise for the whole family. The individual plots are very well cultivated as

allotment gardens with lots of fruit and vegetables.

Gardening according to the principles of ecology and sustainability are central to the ideals of the allotment garden movement in Leipzig. Pesticides are prohibited and the members garden according to ecological principles. There is a communal compost site, which allows avoiding the use of turf and protects the site's resources. Many insects and animals feel at home in the insect hotels, in the dead woodpiles and in the nest boxes. They contribute to the ecological balance of the allotment garden site.

The Seilbahn association runs projects that reach far beyond the borders of the association. Several projects aiming towards a social city contribute to a good relationship between the allotment garden site and the community.

There is a garden for elderly people, who can no longer cultivate their own plot. Everybody can use "the meeting garden" where people from the neighbouring residential areas meet for a rest and for celebrations.

Additionally there are three "community gardens" in our association. They are run together with a non-profit making organisation called "Arbeit und Leben" (work and life). The aim of it is to provide people in need with fresh fruit and vegetables.

The Seilbahn allotment garden site is an excellent example of our allotment garden movement in Leipzig and the whole urban district feels the benefits of this site.



ausgewähltes 2010 mit
GOLD

Sachsen
Leipzig

Einwohner: 518.860
Kleingartenfläche: 1236 ha
Anzahl der Kleingartenanlagen: 278
Anzahl der Kleingärten: 38.809

Kleingartenanlage
Seilbahn

Alter: 92
Fläche: 7,8 ha
davon Gartenfläche: 6,1 ha
Anzahl der Kleingärten: 199

Seilbahn: Traditionsbewusst für Natur und Mensch

Das sächsische Leipzig ist die Wiege des Kleingartenwesens. Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts wurden hier die ersten Kolonien gegründet. Die historische Leipziger Anlage „Dr. Schreiber“ steht heute sogar unter Denkmalschutz und beherbergt das einzige Kleingärtnermuseum weltweit.



22. BUNDESWETTBEWERB 2010 GÄRTEN IM STÄDTERAUM 40

Netherlands: The association Abstede in Utrecht has received the Office diploma for ecological gardening

The garden site of Abstede is situated almost in the heart of Utrecht and has approximately 8,000 m². It has been a horticultural area since the Middle Ages. The area is a stepping stone for urban wildlife. The gardens have no sheds or greenhouses.

Abstede started in 1996 as one of the five first Dutch associations with a project that led to their first National Quality Mark for Natural Gardening (3 stars in 1998).

Sustainability

All gardeners visit their garden on foot or by bicycle.

The only building on the allotment site is a small community building. They make use of solar energy. The only heating is a cast iron wood stove, in which Abstede only uses their own off cuts as fire wood.

Abstede separates their waste as far as there is waste, has a compost toilet, reuses willow as beanstalks and braid fences and pruned branches for stands for a hedge of branches.

The water that is used in the gardens comes from rainwater, water that is pumped from the little stream (Minstream) by hand pumps or by using a bucket to take water out of the little stream.

Abstede has two compost heaps for composting their green waste, the waste of the compost toilet and to help



the nearby animal farm dispose of their manure.

Lay-out of the garden

The individual gardens have:

- Grass paths and occasionally paths of woodchips
- The only pavement is for the terrace
- Many hedges of shrubs
- Several old trees
- Dead trees are left standing or lying down as long as possible
- Nesting for birds, hedgehogs, bats and insects

Lay-out of the site

The site has:

- A dry stone wall
An orchard, which is mown up to twice a year with a scythe taking into account the season (for wildflowers), and which has an old apple tree that bears much fruit and several other fruit trees
- A nature garden
Piles of dead and rotting plant material for grass snakes
Berries and flowers for birds and insects
- A little marsh in course of construction, which already has bumble bees

Stimulating the gardeners

Abstede stimulates their gardeners to:

- Keep the soil covered at all times to protect and stimulate the soil organisms
- Have water on their garden for birds, lizards etc.
- Have a compost heap
- Have native trees, shrubs and preferably fruit, walnut or hazelnut trees
- Have an animal friendly fence or no fence at all
- Have a hedge of shrubs

Abstede organises several activities for its gardeners such as:

- How to make nest boxes
- Information meetings on crop rotation

- Exchange of knowledge and plants
- Information on different nesting possibilities like boxes, bundles of stalks for insects, dry stone walls, branches, leaves or stalk heaps and small, less orderly natural areas in the garden
- Registration of sightings of animals and plants.

Purchasing

Joint purchase of organic seeds, seedlings, manure and chestnut poles.

“Natural” contacts of Abstede

Abstede has several contacts with other organisations like:

- Lekker Utrechs (Tasty Utrecht) - promotes a short route from farmer to consumer
- Project exploration of the stream Minstroom – Cooperation of the Utrecht city council, other organizations and residents to improve its natural plants and animals and recreational attractiveness
- Stichting Erven Utrecht (Utrecht Heritage Foundation) – an organization that promotes a historical and environmentally viable landscape lay-out of the area
- Biologica – participation in a project on biodiversity

The percentage of gardeners that effectively apply the criteria requested is approximately 98%.

Switzerland: The allotment garden association Bern South-west has received the diploma for an ecological gardening

Peter Siegenthaler, president

The Bern South-West allotment garden association was founded in 1929. Our association consists of 10 separate sites, located all over the territory of the town of Bern. Our association has nearly 500 members and is the biggest in town. Managing the association successfully is a very hard job for the five members of the executive board. This is especially due to the fact that we have a storage yard for goods and a fairly important horticultural service. When I became president twenty years ago, I was not given any historical documents. I guess it was the same for my predecessor Franz Niederhäuser. Contrary to the foundation of other societies, these documents were not considered to be important on the level of associations as it was only an allotment garden association.

I have been a member of the Bern South-West allotment garden association for 43 years and have acted as president for the last twenty years. I can well remember that everything and really everything was planted in a monoculture. Valuable garden waste was burned and it didn't bother anybody. Alternative crops and a gardening ethos respectful of nature were unknown ideas at that time, at least in allotment gardens.

In 1994 I had the opportunity to be trained as gardening councillor under the patronage of the authorities for water protection and waste management of the canton of Bern. In inten-

sive whole day courses under the leadership of Hansjürg Hörler, agriculture engineer, Susanna Krebs and Hannes Grossenbacher we were given basic knowledge on soil, fertilisation, composting, protection of plants, adult education and structure of organisations. These courses were held both in the rooms of the technical services of agriculture in Zollikofen and in Bern. The people who successfully passed the difficult exam received a certificate. This training enables us to advise home- and allotment gardeners in gardening techniques, which are respectful of nature and also to organize courses.

During the following year we offered our first courses and now every new member is obliged, when he gets an allotment garden plot, to take part in such a course within the following two years.

The number of members attending these courses is increasing steadily and today I train approximately 40 to 50 new members per year in our allotment garden section.

No more poison, back to nature! This principle is largely accepted by the members, especially by the young



members. They want to learn and they understand that it is not possible to avoid this principle.

Very soon, I will hand over the presidency to somebody else and I will then be able to consider with satisfaction that I have contributed to laying the first stone for a healthy and environmentally friendly way of dealing with nature.

Switzerland: The allotment garden association Bern-East has received the diploma for social activities

The Bern-East allotment garden association was created in 1927 and was one of the first allotment garden associations in the town of Bern. During the last 85 years the site has been relocated several times due to construction works and the use of the ground for other purposes. Since 1977 the site has been located on its present-day site known as "Sonnenhof" bordered by blocks of flats and the covered motorway. The site is located on the outskirts of the town, but the Bern railway station can be reached in fifteen minutes by tram. It is as well situated within a recreation area for walkers and cyclists, not far away from the residential areas and offers a pleasant and interesting view into the very diverse life of the allotment gardens to the many passers by.

The allotment garden site has 235 plots. Over 30% of its members come from abroad. It is a multicultural allotment garden site, where the word integration is not without meaning, but where it is lived in a very natural and evident way. In this way the association makes an important contribution to the integration of the foreign population. This element is additionally highlighted by the fact that the association has put two garden plots at the disposal of the HEKS (evangelisches Hilfswerk der Kirchen Schweiz, the help fund of the protestant churches in Switzerland). These plots are cultivated in common by several asylum





seekers. In this way these people get first and important contacts with our members and their first steps in the new country where they have sought asylum are facilitated.

A peaceful life together and above all the social element are essential features of our association's life. The association is always open to innovative projects. For example in spring 2010, in cooperation with the horticultural service of the town and disabled organisations, a pilot project was started in the canton of Bern. The aim was to create an allotment garden plot accessible to wheelchairs, as well as a garden shed complying with the requirements of disabled people. This

project was executed in strong cooperation with the two future wheelchair dependent users.

After approximately 600 hours of voluntary work by the members of the association, these allotment garden plots accessible to wheelchairs could be given to the two members by the end of May 2010.

In 2011 the allotment garden site "Sonnenhof" was then one of the main actors of the seven part TV series "Small paradise" showing the allotment gardens in the Swiss towns. This TV series was successful in giving the viewers a glance into the colourful and active life of the allotment garden.

Fellowship is also very important in the association. With many activities the association stimulates fellowship and a peaceful life together. Here are some activities out of the very large yearly programme: jazz tournament, garden festival, the day of the flower, pumpkin festival, Thanksgiving day, Gnagi and pea soup festival, Christmas in the garden.

With its innovative social and progressive attitude and its numerous activities the Bern-East allotment garden association is certainly a good example of a well-functioning allotment garden site and thus makes a great publicity for our wonderful hobby in our "green world".

Switzerland: The Geneva allotment garden federation has received the diploma for social activities

Jean-François Roulin,

member of the executive board of the Swiss allotment garden federation

Feasibility study: 6 months in 2003

Project: elaborated in 2004 and approved by the assembly of delegates on February 5th 2005

Realisation: 2007

Inauguration: 14th September, 2007

Costs: 40,000 Sfr

Number of plots: four in two different sites

Project supported by:
Wilsdorf Foundation (Geneva)
Allotment garden association of Geneva

Funds Helios (Geneva)
Allotment garden association in the French speaking part of Switzerland (ARJF)
Swiss federation of allotment gardens (FSJF)

History of the allotment garden federation in Geneva:

The allotment garden federation in Geneva was founded on March 13th, 1922. At that time it was called Cantonal federation of allotment gardens. The history of gardens in Geneva goes back to the 14th century when gardeners banished from the South of France came to live in Geneva.

There was a second wave of immi-

gration when the Huguenots (Edict of Nantes 1685) came to live in Geneva and started cultivating vegetables. Over the centuries these gardeners stopped cultivating vegetables and started to work in the banks and in the industry. Nevertheless Geneva is still today a very important region for the cultivation of vegetables. Then, at the turn of the 19th century, the ideas of Abbé Lemire fell on fruitful grounds and Geneva had more than 4,000 garden plots.

From the 1960s and 1970s onwards one could notice the loss of these small plots due to the extension of the city and there were only 2,500 plots left. It was at the beginning of the last century, i.e. in 1925, that the cantonal federations of Geneva, Zurich, Basel, Bern and Lausanne joined together to create the Swiss allotment garden federation.

Description of the project:

The project to create plots for disabled people has its origin in the perspicacity of the honorary president of the allotment garden federation of Geneva and former vice-president and honorary member of the Swiss allotment garden federation, Frédéric Schaer.

Having been personally disabled for many years, his project helped to get





rid of the pre-conceived idea that “The pleasure of gardening is exclusively reserved to those people who enjoy good health”. For people with reduced mobility gardening presents real difficulties. But how could one avoid this problem? The federation of allotment gardens in Geneva took the initiative in realising the necessary adaptations required and tried to meet the real needs of these people as closely as possible.

In order to develop this project a feasibility study was undertaken with several specialist institutions for example the Foyer Handicap in Cressy. Following this the central committee of the allotment garden federation in Geneva decided to start this new project in 2004.

Meanwhile, the Geneva federation was involved in the creation of a new allotment garden site “Les Blanchets” on the territory of the commune of Grd Saconnex. The idea for such a plot was immediately adopted and with the support of the commune this plot was realised before the one in Plan-les-Ouates, as this project was facilitated by the creation of this new allotment garden site.

On February 5th, 2005 the general assembly of delegates of the allotment garden federation in Geneva accepted

a loan of 40,000 Sfr in order to financially enable the beginning of the necessary work.

The members of the central committee of the allotment garden federation in Geneva and the president of the allotment garden site of Plan-les-Ouates Thierry Houlmann, supervised the project until its completion. Thierry Houlmann states: “We had to separate the raised beds by corridors allowing wheelchairs to pass. To raise the soil is one problem, but one has to think about a great number of other small details like for example the watering of plants, which constitutes another difficulty for people with a handicap”. He adds “I myself cultivate a garden plot, I therefore know the pleasures of relaxation after a working day”.

Unable to bend due to a paralysis of one arm and one leg, Sandrine Mylonas cultivates a 100 sqm plot. She underlines with a big smile on her face “As the ground is raised, my working area is at an ideal height and reduces my efforts”. Judging by the plants on the raised beds, Sandrine really has green fingers!

Thanks to the financial help given by different institutions like Funds Helios, Hans Wilsdorf Foundation, the allotment garden association of Geneva, the allotment garden federation of the French speaking part of Switzerland and the Swiss allotment garden federation, the work could be done without exceeding the budget.

The inauguration of these two plots for disabled people took place on September 14th, 2007 with many authorities attending this ceremony. They welcomed this initiative: “These realisations leave nobody indifferent”. “These gardens are an example and I know more than one resident, who would love to cultivate his vegetables” explains the co-founder member of a holiday house for disabled people. “There is no reason why a vegetable plot cannot be of benefit to everyone” explains Thierry Houlmann. “These

plots are the first ones created in Switzerland and we hope that other organisations will follow this example”. It goes without saying that the infrastructures are especially adapted to people suffering from a disability. They are in accordance with the rules and regulations applicable to the specific facilities for disabled people. The home of the association on the site is also equipped with a specially adapted toilet.

Within the framework of the European Floral exhibition in 2008, the allotment garden federation in Geneva presented its plot for disabled people on a 40 sqm surface. It was an exact copy of the real plot existing in the allotment garden site of Plan-les-Ouates. The idea was to give people a different point of view on allotment gardens.

A group of volunteer allotment gardeners directed by Jean-François Roulin, member of the central committee of the allotment garden federation of Geneva and vice-president of the Swiss allotment garden federation, needed five days to construct the plot. The exhibition attracted more than 50,000 visitors over eight days and received the honour of the “Coup de Coeur” by the radio programme M. Gardener. This radio programme is broadcast every Sunday morning and had set up a temporary recording studio in the hall of the “Floralies”. Eight professional gardeners answered listeners’ questions.

This exhibition was a huge success with the population of the French speaking part of Switzerland. They came from all over the region as well as from neighbouring France.

Other allotment garden associations, members of the Geneva federation, have put the same principles into practice and there are now four allotment garden sites in Geneva which welcome people with reduced mobility. The allotment garden association in Bern inaugurated its plot for disabled people last year.



The Belgian allotment gardeners present themselves

Structure

The national federation contains two regional federations, one Flemish and one Walloon federation. These two regional federations contain 9 provincial federations. The Flemish federation (including Bruxelles-Capital Dutch speaking) contains 240 associations and the Walloon federation contains 50 associations. They unify in total 35,000 members.

Allotment gardens

5,301 gardens with an average size of 250 sq metres.

Administration

Voluntary work

Ownership

60% communal landowners, 37% private owners, 3% others.

The Belgian allotment garden federation is based in 4210-OTEPPE for a period of three years ending on December 31st, 2012. The presidency of the federation is assumed alternately by the Flemish and Walloon federation for a three years' term. The federation's domicile changes consequently at the end of each term.

The organisation as a whole contains 35,000 members of which 5,301 have an allotment garden. The average al-



lotment garden size is 250 sq metres and the overall total of allotment gardens is 150 hectares. The annual affiliation fee amounts to 0.14 € per sq meter. There is no contribution paid to the national federation.

The allotment garden associations function in an autonomous way and are mostly not within the remit of any public authority. Certain associations organise lectures that are financially supported by the Walloon and Flemish regions. Some provincial federations get a financial support from their provincial government. The national federation neither gets financial support from the public authorities nor an affiliation fee from the regional federations. The national federation consequently supports by itself the obligations arising from its affiliation to the

International Office. All work done for the national, regional, provincial and local federations is done on a voluntary basis.

Nearly all allotment gardens are equipped with a shed with an average size varying between 10 and 15 sq metres. The shed is used to store garden tools. They cannot be used as a dwelling. Only 7% of the gardens are connected to electricity by a communal connection. 48% of the gardens have a collective connection to drinking water. You can find nearly no toilets in the gardens.

The main aim of the national federation is to support the creation of new allotment garden sites. In fact since its creation at the end the 19th century we consider that the allotment gar-

dens have to comply with three fundamental functions: a social, economic and environment function.

Today when a new attraction for nature and the need for a useful and healthy leisure time activity is sought, the importance for the preservation of our environment is highlighted.

Allotment gardens are an active green space cultivated in a communal spirit within the urban areas and their outskirts. Fellowship is a key-practice in the allotment garden sites. The local authorities and especially the towns and the communes have to be made aware of the importance of allotment gardens and for giving them moral and financial support.

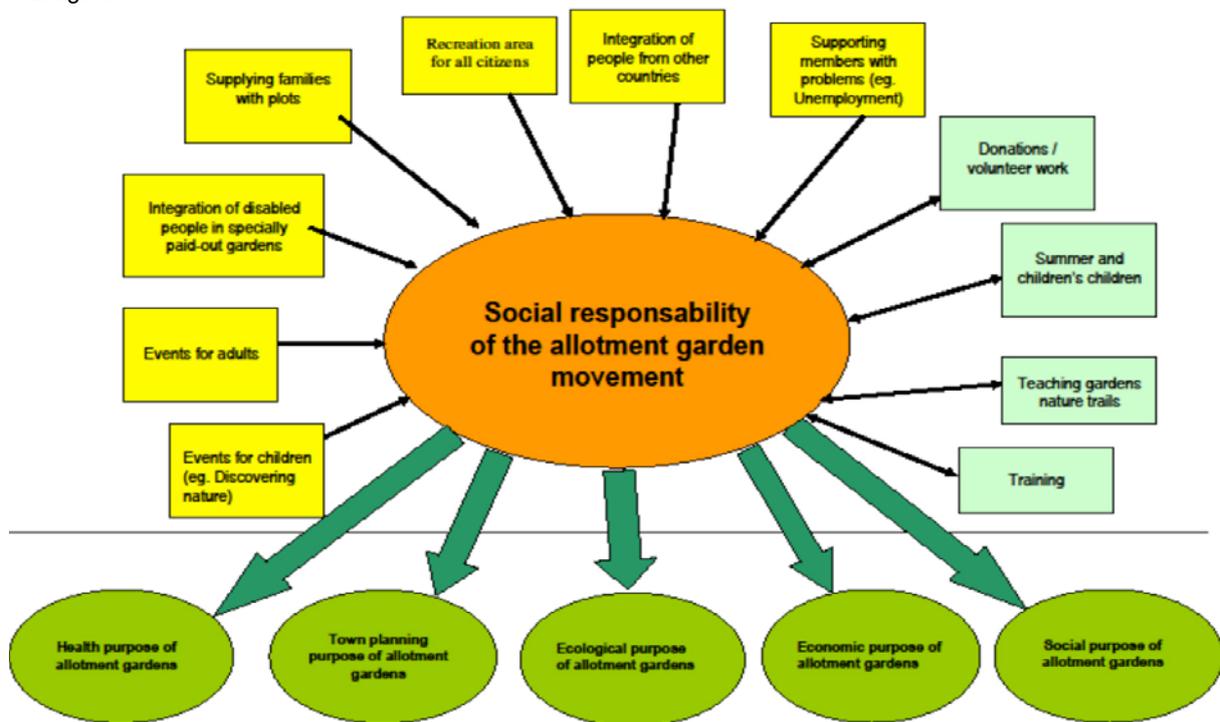
Germany: The allotment garden movement's social responsibility (2nd part)

Dr. Norbert Franke

President of the Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde e.V.

The following image contains eleven fields that clearly show the social responsibility of allotment gardens (see Image 4).

Image 4



A more detailed analysis could even bring to light other social facets, which could be impressive proof of the far-reaching benefits of allotment gardens.

The fields in the middle and on the left show activities with an internal effect, and those on the right show the

sectors or purposes with an external effect.

The following examples illustrate the fact that allotment gardens are an organisation that gives, rather than an organisation that receives.

- Events for children
- Events for adults

- Integration of disabled people into garden life and the association
- Providing families with allotment gardens
- Recreation areas for all citizens
- Integrating people from different ethnic groups and walks of life
- Supporting members who have difficulties (eg. Unemployment)

The allotment garden movement also has a social impact externally. Donations and voluntary work not only help with projects within the associations but also help other people. Some examples are the allotment gardeners' donations to victims of the floods in Germany in 2002 or to the victims of the tsunami in Thailand in 2005. In addition to these remarkable actions of solidarity, there have been numerous contributions and funding on a daily basis on a smaller scale that bear testimony to the allotment gardeners' social engagement: supporting therapy centres for children affected by cancer, promoting associations that look after children from troubled homes or in foster care, and participating in integration projects.

The activities in summer and for children also show that allotment gardeners have a social responsibility not only to their peers but also to all citizens in their neighbourhood, by including them in the association's activities. These activities also prove that allotment garden associations form an integral part of communities.

Above all, learning gardens and nature trails in allotment garden areas lend themselves to the sharing of knowledge and aim to bring people closer to nature. The planning and carrying out of these partly scientific projects demand a lot of effort and organisational skill, but are nevertheless worth the effort. Children, teenagers and young adults at whom these projects are aimed and who participate in them are often the allotment gardeners, association members and board members of the future. Advice and training sessions organised by the associations – particularly in the field of gardening advice – have an influence far beyond the allotment garden areas.

These examples of the allotment garden movement's social activity have already shown that these associations are not "a state within a state" but a part of society. These circumstances pave the way to other requirements of

the allotment garden movement:

The role allotment garden groups play in ecology and town planning is no longer questioned, as a town designed without allotment gardens is simply unimaginable these days. Furthermore, allotment garden groups fill more and more community and administrative roles, particularly with regards to the upkeep and maintenance of green spaces. In essence, allotment gardens represent public green spaces with a significant impact on the urban climate and ecology of towns, which must be noted.

In Germany, one million allotment gardeners look after around 46,600 hectares of green space. A fact that is often and deliberately overlooked. The benefits of this for town's residents, thanks to this upkeep of green spaces, are rarely mentioned. The soil in allotment gardens with its important green elements is home to a significant part of urban vegetation and also works as an important supply of oxygen in particularly heavily populated areas – i.e. our cities – where the atmosphere is often polluted by smog, carbon dioxide and small particles. Catalytic converters and particulate filters on cars are not the solution for a healthier environment, but the upkeep and maintenance of green spaces are. Not only rainforests like the Amazon but also the areas of our allotment gardens represent an often underestimated supply of oxygen on our planet. Although this statement seems a bit of an exaggeration, it is based on the theory that one mature tree of medium size produces as much oxygen as 150 people consume during their entire life.

Numerous publications bear testimony to the positive impact of gardening on health. Regular and consistent work in the garden is beneficial for the body and its organs, helps keep people healthy, forms muscles, increases stamina and contributes to an improved physical performance for humans, to maintain it if not to build

it up in the first place. Growing your own fruit and vegetables, herbs and aromatic and medicinal plants leads to a healthy and varied diet, rich in vitamins for allotment gardeners – a sort of applied herbal medicine.

The economic importance of the allotment garden movement on society – its economic purpose – must be highlighted. Too often, discussions amongst people and in politics largely aim to discredit the allotment garden movement as a "subsidised business" or living off grants, without taking into account the fact that the organisation is not a community that lives of financial aid or grants, but is able to function thanks to the affiliation fees of its members – it is financially independent.

It is therefore justifiable that allotment gardens be considered as an essential part of a living town, and a way to measure the quality of life of its residents (see Image 5).

The social significance of the allotment garden movement has changed throughout its varied history, but it has remained true to its origins. With regards to its historic mission – i.e. to give those in need a plot of land to grow on during the industrial era – this purpose still exists, and also from its own perspective, to support socially deprived people by giving them a garden.

However, this perception is limited, as the allotment garden movement these days has a significant social responsibility for large parts of the urban population and society. This responsibility influences not only the evolution and design of our towns and communities but also the protection and preservation of our biosphere, the living space that surrounds us. Particularly in these areas, the allotment garden movement takes on an importance that is not recognised as such by politicians, communities, landlords and civil servants. Therefore this significance is not adequately used as a basis for politi-

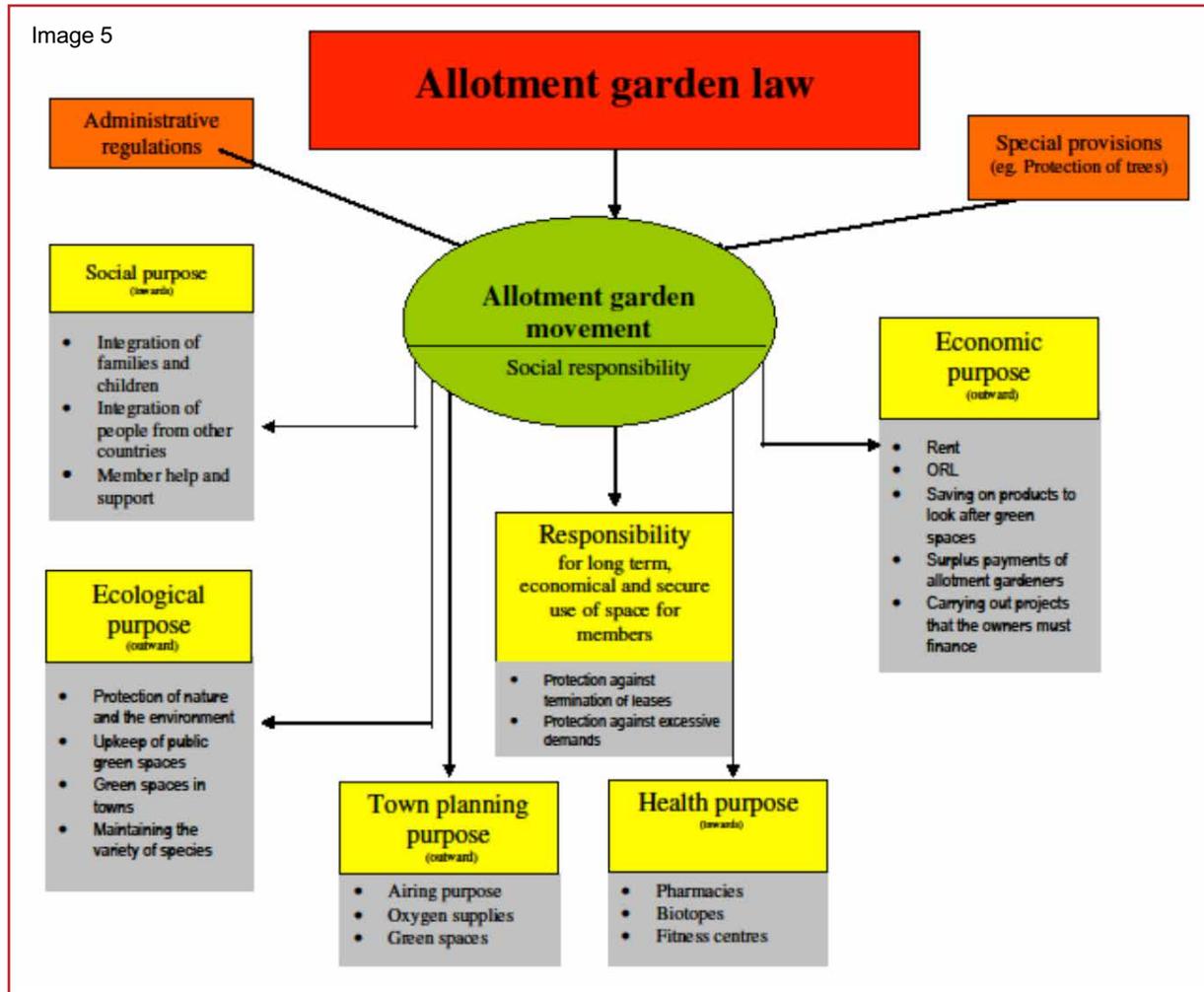
cal and administrative actions.

The social and community significance of the allotment garden movement can – despite the numerous facets it holds – be summed up as follows: allotment gardens and allotment garden associ-

ations offer a platform to people with the objective of turning modern life into a relationship between people, towns and nature in a variety of ways, and to take on social responsibility in a world of perpetual change.

Allotment gardens are the “green salt of the earth” of towns and communes. Allotment gardeners are the protectors of the environment.

End





France: The beehive project

By Joëlle Petyt,
of the French allotment garden federation

Background

Knowing that our gardeners are responsible citizens and committed to environmentally-friendly activities since 2007 (the date when the Gardening & Environment Charter was established), it went without saying that a beehive project could be considered in the Grand Lyon allotment gardens. This is because bees are an essential element in maintaining biodiversity in towns, as they contribute to the pollination of 80% of plants. The project would also determine if the mortality rate of bees is actually lower in towns than in the countryside.

In fact, an action to protect and develop bees in the Lyon area came to light in 2009 thanks to the determined actions, over two years, of Bernard

Justet, President of the Fort de Bron allotment garden association.

As it was also of a strong educational nature, it interested our gardeners and the general public, and it captivated the Grand Lyon allotments.

So, two years after they were installed, how are the beehives faring that were placed in Grand Lyon (Bron, Décines, Sainte Foy-lès-Lyon and Villeurbanne)?

A positive balance for the cogs in this project's wheels

Since April 2011 Daniel Fragnay, treasurer of the Décines allotment garden association, has held presidency of the FNJFC's local committee in the Rhône valley, so he has driven the

"Beehives in our gardens" project. He has been helped, on the beekeeping side, by Jean-Luc Lépine, "an expert beekeeper", as well as Boris Rojas, Patrick Mercadier and Ludovic Rojas (beekeepers for East Lyon) who oversaw the correct placement of the beehives, their waxing, the upkeep of their swarm and their nourishment. Daniel Fragnay confesses to being rather satisfied. "We have harvested around 150 kg of honey this year in 2011, with harvests that lasted from May to July on four sites (Bron, Décines, Sainte Foy-Lambotte and Fort) which currently represent 14 beehives."

However, everyone agrees that the production of honey is not the main goal of this mission.



According to Mr Assi and Mr Villien from the Urban Ecology team in Grand Lyon, who drove this project with the FNJFC: *“It is, above all, about reintroducing biodiversity in this “semi-natural” context of gardens in town: the bee, a fundamental pollinating insect, and gardeners must join together.”* So the report is clear: the bee population is perfectly looked after. They have even progressed and the gardeners are totally committed to the project. These two links in the chain of “biodiversity” work perfectly!

So bees are faring well in our allotment gardens

The bees established on allotment garden sites in Sainte-Foy-lès-Lyon, Décines and Fort de Bron - apart from a few scares – swarms flying from the base, losing bees due to varroa (in four beehives) and swarming – have not only produced honey but also swarmed (from May to June) in some places due to the beehives’ good health and also mild weather and premature flowering.

In Fort de Bron, Boris Rojas, advising beekeeper on the site and initiator of the Aéromiel project explains that they increased the beehives from three to five on site. With this swarming, “the honey harvest” was reduced because the bees first use their energy to move

back in and grow their numbers before dedicating themselves to producing honey. Nevertheless, we had 7 kg of honey in autumn and 25 kg in spring 2010.”

What are the other positives that allow us to continue this activity?

The physical-chemical studies of honey over two years are an incentive to extend this project.

Gardeners on the sites involved in the project are aware of the beehives in their gardens.

The educational element is an equally important constituent stated in the agreement between Grand Lyon and the FNJFC.

The apiary is effectively an educational tool that should not be ignored, as it is a living object and one that constantly evolves: discovering the life of bees, harvesting honey and its tasting were all on the cards!

A number of schools attended the “Bee” days (thank you to Naturama). Regular events have also been taking place since 2009, particularly for Environment Days, such as the welcoming of 1,800 students to Fort de Bron in May 2010.

They have allowed a big part of the urban and suburban inhabitants of Lyon to get to know the incredibly hierarchical and organised world of bees. These activity days have made their audiences intrigued, taken aback, amused... and, above all, they have allowed everyone to recognise the need to protect these insects, which aren’t so nasty but are actually very useful.

What does the future hold for these bees?

It is known that bees are threatened throughout the world. Pesticides, particularly systemics, are a proven cause of their death. However, other basic threats are well and truly present, such as the presence of varroa, an acarid larval parasite that considerably weakens beehives; or nosema, a mushroom that gives bees diarrhoea (in spring) and also means death! Bees are one of the first links in the food chain. They are also the first link of this chain for people, insects and biodiversity through our gardens, which are vast networks and reservoirs of biodiversity.

These bees are “undeniable sentries of biodiversity. They need these environmentally-friendly reserves that our gardens represent.”

This project is a success as it allows us to better understand the wellbeing of bees in our allotment gardens. It has been made possible thanks to the contribution of a number of volunteers. This is truly the sign of a gamble that paid off!

“This first phase calls for an extension of the network – all it needs now is volunteers and new sites to keep growing this fantastic adventure.”



Great-Britain: How much rent is it acceptable for a landlord to charge for an allotment?

Georgie Willock,
English Allotment Society

Currently this is a question and conundrum faced by plot holders and landlords across England, as well as The National Allotment Society. In the UK allotments are enshrined in law, but unfortunately the legislation

is two-dimensional. It says that the rent charged should be a 'reasonable' amount, but nowhere does it offer guidance as to what is meant by reasonable; and on top of this, the law only extends to local authority allot-

ments, offering no protection on rents, to those who garden private allotment sites.

Weekly, the National Society receives pleas from allotment associations and

plot holders who are facing rent rises, which seem unfair and unreasonable. When portrayed by the media the issue of allotment rents is too easily dumbed down, painted as a silly argument conducted by 'grumpy old men' but the issue is not whether the rent goes up from £10 a year to £20, still appearing to many as a cheap and affordable activity, but rather the fact that the rent has increased by 100%. The reports received by the National Allotment Society, talk of percentage increases that double or triple the amounts being paid, leaving the plot holder in a vulnerable position

The roots of this situation can be traced back to the recession and the Government's attempts to cut budgets, reduce local council expenditure and make services more cost effective. While this approach is nothing new and has been seen before, the outcomes for these service users can be terribly unfair.

Dave Morris is the Vice Chair of the National Allotment Society; he also operates in the North West as a Regional Representative supporting local associations and plot holders. "Time and time again I have seen local authorities putting up rents on allotments, and while I know we are in a recession and every penny counts, the message which is being driven home is one of supply and demand. If the plot holder refuses the rent increase, then the local authority knows it's got a steady stream of new tenants ready to jump on the plots and willing to pay whatever rent is levied at them. In essence the local authority is in a very strong position while the tenant is left with limited powers."

"What would be more fair or justifiable is if local authorities chose to increase rents in line with the increases imposed on other services. So for instance, if the cost of swimming goes up from £3 to £3.30, then the increase is 10%. Plot holders in my region would understand this increase and see it as a fair system affecting every-



one who uses council services. "

While the above scenario works well for local authority tenants gardening today, unfortunately there is still the issue of rents in the long term and what happens to those with private landlords? The obvious answer is to create a national policy which incorporates a set rental charge – but is this really possible?

When we asked visitors to our stand at The Edible Garden Show back in March, an audience of gardeners and allotment holders, what they would be willing to pay per month for an allotment, most responded by saying no more than £5 a month, the equivalent

of £60 a year. Could this be indicative of what people would really like to pay for their plot? For many plot holders this would be a joyful amount, cutting their current rent in half, while for others it would be a disaster as they'd see their subs increasing ten times over.

In essence, writing a policy sounds like an easy plan, but trying to place a value on something is a hard job. The notion of value is subjective, depending on many variables including the perception of benefits gained, coupled with an individual's socio-economic markers. For example, one person might value an allotment in the same way as they do their gym membership;

as something that brings satisfaction, health and a sense of pride. As such the value placed on both the allotment and gym membership would be the same – say £40 a month each. But then when you take into consideration the facilities each activity provides - air conditioning, towels, showers, equipment and staff for the gym and nothing more than a piece of land, shed and running water for the allotment - can the value be calculated the same?

We already know that the difference in rents paid across the country differs greatly depending on where an individual lives, whether their site is self-managed, local authority owned or belongs to a private landlord. Historically allotment gardening was seen

as something done by the 'labouring poor', 'working classes' or those with flat caps and whippets – a poor man's hobby accompanied by low rents. An activity only valued by those involved. Today the situation has changed, allotments are trendy; they attract families, working professionals and those from middle-class backgrounds as well as the traditional allotmenters. Now their value extends beyond the boundary fence, penetrating communities who see them as an asset. This notion of value is intrinsic to the survival of the allotment movement, and as we all know, an item's value comes from the notion of how much people are prepared to pay for something.

It is a hard line we must tread when we

come to write such a policy, as there are many factors which need to be taken into consideration – how much people are willing to pay, what else is happening in the same market place, the value placed on allotments by society, the discrepancies in rent already being paid and what services the landlord is prepared to offer.

Ultimately we, as The National Allotment Society, want rents which are fair and represent value for money – so it seems that we have a lot of work ahead of us. First must come the research, and then a policy based on a realistic formula. So we ask the English allotment garden federation to bear with us, while we work to unravel this conundrum.

Germany: Finding the crux of public relations – not a disjointed job but on a united front (part 1)

Contribution as part of the seminar on PR for the Bundesverbandes Deutscher Gartenfreunde

Sylvia Stanulla,
Manager – Edition W. Wächter GmbH, Bremen

In a time of excessive requests and an ever-increasing number of media (print, TV, radio, internet, mobile phones...) and an equally-increasing amount of news, it has become essential to be perceived as an organisation that defends its own interests, points of view and claims. This includes gardener associations.

And this is as much through the media as through whom you want to reach beyond them.

Around 55,000 people in Germany earn a living in public relations. The income from fees in the sector (minus staffing costs) is estimated to be around 5 billion euros – an important economic factor in the communication sector.

This is also an indication that PR has an effective impact; otherwise companies would not spend so much money on this area to support their objectives.

1. Public relations – what exactly does this mean?

There are various definitions of public

relations or PR, which generally express more or less the same thing:

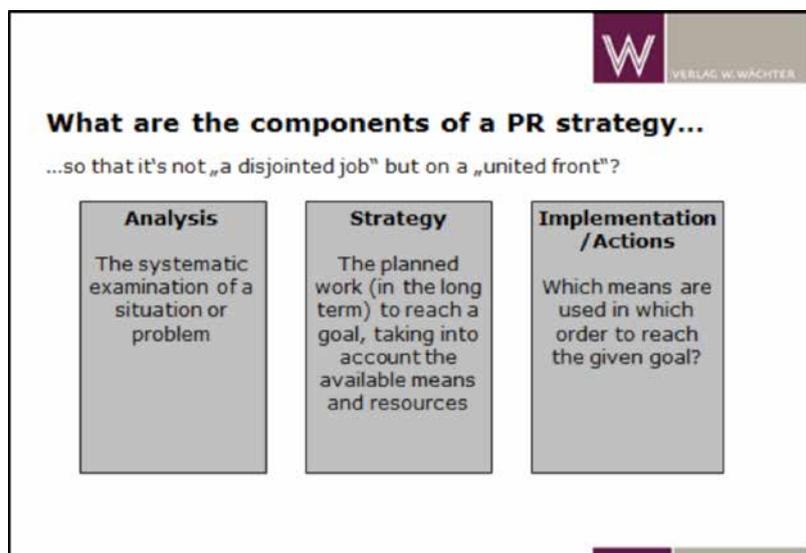
- Public relations represent the conscious, systematic, planned and continuous communication of an organisation with its public...
- ... with the goal of maintaining understanding and trust...
- ... and to support its relationship with the public in order to help the organisation reach its objectives.

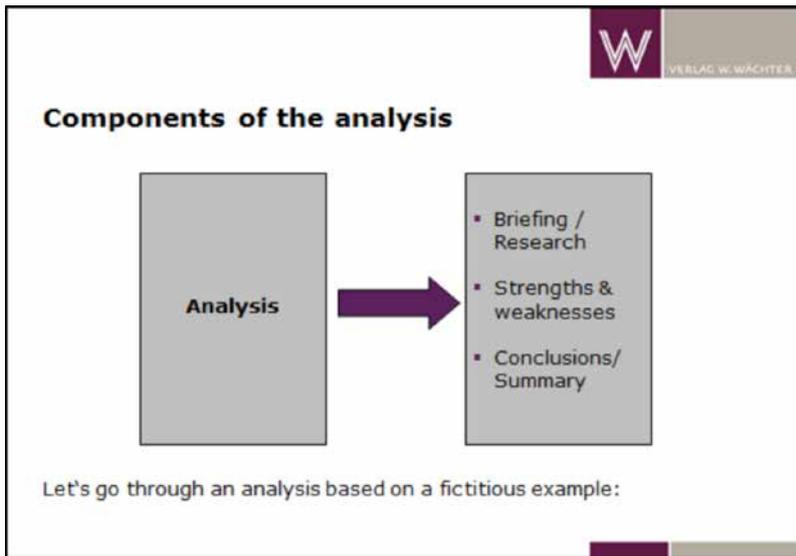
A definition, that very clearly indicates that PR activities must be planned and implemented as part of a strategy.

2. What are the components of a PR strategy...

... so that it's not "a disjointed job" but on a "united front"?

A PR strategy – like strategies in many other disciplines – is made up of three parts:





To develop a strategy, a PR agency charges fees according to the reach and scale of the work. The hourly rate for PR consultancy fees ranges from 50 to 120 euros (depending on who gives the advice, i.e. the boss or a member of staff), and the price of a strategy ranges from 1,500 to 6,500 euros – dependent on the reach of the mission.

As for the main aspects, the most attention should be paid to the analysis and strategy for PR. They form the base which always should be referred back to when implementing new activities.

Speaking of preparation, pay attention to detail, e.g. when setting the date for an event. Don't reserve dates when there's a football cup final, for example, unless the transmission will be on the giant screen during the match if you want to also attract football fans.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Does our organisation have the necessary strengths to make use of its opportunities?</p> <p>"Hard factors"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Every year several million euros from tenancy leases go into public funds. Numerous hectares of public green space are maintained free of charge by the allotment gardeners. + The allotment gardeners continuously invest in the economy and belong to the "urban output" <p>"Soft factors"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Green oases, improving the climate, promoting healthy living, offering a social environment, integration + Cross-generational activities, places of learning for schools and children's gardens, recreation and regeneration land – the allotment gardens serve an ecological and economical purpose as well as social cohesion. 	<p>Does our organisation miss its chances because of its weaknesses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In comparison to other organisations in the community, the XY association has little presence amongst the public and in the media. - The association's offers and services lack publicity and therefore support from the community. - In political interests, the XY association has become a ballgame, as it hasn't been cared about enough to have sufficient support from the town's inhabitants – it hasn't got its own image.
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Does our organisation have the strength to get the better of its threats?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The XY association has a number of hard and soft factors (attractive offers and content) that will allow it to build and improve its image through targeted PR activities. + The XY association has enough volunteer "allies" who want to work together in a joined-up and regular manner to improve its image. 	<p>What risks is our organisation exposed to because of its weaknesses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The allotment garden land is destroyed in favour of the profits from building houses and businesses, or simply for financial gain. - There is a "sales" atmosphere

2.1 What are the components of an analysis?

During the briefing all information necessary to create a PR strategy are collected. This includes the definition of the problem, setting objectives, available resources (financial, manpower) and a portrayal of the situation, as well as information on the organisation itself.

All other information on the organisation that is necessary to create the strategy but not available must be researched. Generally, this includes "external factors" such as competitors, target groups (that must be reached), media distributors etc.

The results of the research can be grouped into an analysis of strengths and weaknesses.

Everything is then compiled into a conclusion, a summary.

The information collected should then be reviewed to evaluate which...

Strengths/Weaknesses

W
VERLAG W. WÄCHTER

Conclusion

The XY association draws a positive conclusion from ist SWOT analysis:

- In summary: allotment gardens serve an ecological and economical purpose as well as social cohesion!
- We have much to offer.
- We have a number of arguments on which we can develop our PR strategy, but...

... are visible or hidden in the organisation and what approaches can be envisaged to reach a solution.

The problem in our fictitious example:

In the XY urban association a large number of allotment gardens are in grave danger.

But why? And what can the XY association do about it? What are the XY association's strengths, its weaknesses, and where are the opportunities and risks hiding?

Agencies will conduct an analysis such as this, usually in the form of a "SWOT" analysis: SWOT is an anagram of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. There is a model on the next page.

W
VERLAG W. WÄCHTER

What is the current situation with the media?

- Whether it is newspapers, radio, TV, mobile phones or the Internet – all media today is drowning in a vast sea of information everyday from which it can pick and choose.
- Headline events in culture and scandals usually attract more attention than local action and activities, and they are considered of little importance.
- Given the pinpoint presence of the media, one mention in a newspaper rarely has a lasting impact on the public.



Conclusion/Summary

At the end of the analysis, i.e. the briefing, research, SWOT analysis, a conclusion was reached. It summarises what was shown in more detail above.

How is the XY association going to get into the media – and therefore into the public eye? And:

For this reason: facts, facts, facts

- In 1993 the news editor at that time, Helmut Markwort, created a significant formula for a new magazine, "Focus", with the slogan "facts, facts, facts".
- This fruitful formula is equally important in the collection of information for a PR strategy. For the XY association this meant responding to a series of questions in a concrete manner:

W
VERLAG W. WÄCHTER

What can we offer in a concrete manner?

- What amount in euros is currently paid to the community in tenancy leases?
- How many hectares of green land are maintained – and what would be the cost to the community, without the work of the allotment gardeners?
- How many people use the allotment garden sites to take a break? Collect testimonials from visitors on the value that they represent to them.
- Outline all of the projects that exist in the federation or the association to allow the „soft“ factors to be highlighted.

In the scope of the strategy, the responses become messages to communication.

To be followed.



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- European Christmas landscapes: a transfrontier analysis

European Christmas Landscapes: a transfrontier analysis

Alexander V. Drozdov, Professor,
Institute of Geography, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscou



All European cultural landscapes have some universal or transfrontier features and some regional or national features. Undoubtedly, one of the key pan-European cultural factors is Christianity and the individual manifestations of Christianity in the cultural landscapes of towns, villages, resorts and other locations. A striking example of this is provided by the images that form in people's minds when they are asked to think of a Christmas landscape.

Mental landscapes of this sort are very interesting subjects for transfrontier analysis. We are all aware of universal Christmas images and symbols, such as the cave in the desert, the star of Bethlehem, the three kings, the shepherds and the donkey. There are also national images such as the Christ-

mas character Santa Claus, and the Russian equivalent, "Ded Moroz" (literally "Father Frost"). What we should be investigating here is whether there are other Christmas symbols which are reflected in the regional features of cultural landscapes. It is reasonable to suppose that they will be reflected to varying degrees in cultural phenomena such as painting, poetry and music.

To ascertain whether this is true, we compared a large number of old and contemporary Russian and German Christmas cards. The results were as follows:

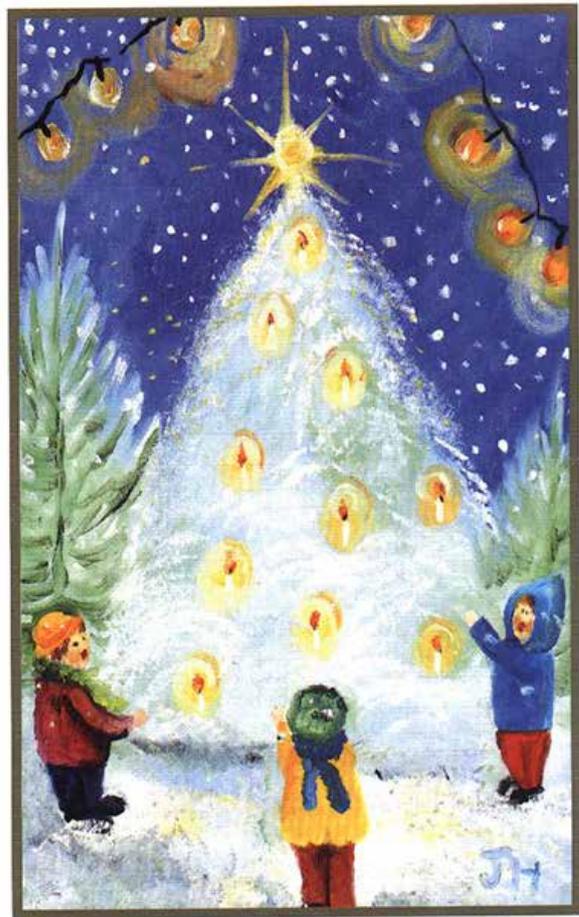
- Many of the cards show rural landscapes or villages. In all of the pictures, there is snow, houses with lights in the windows, smoke rising gently from chimneys and the moon

in the sky. However, the houses and churches on the German and Russian cards look different. These are country-specific regional differences.

- Some of the scenes have a trans-regional character. For instance, on some modern Russian cards, there are pictures of the countryside villas of "New Russians" (nouveaux riches) and reindeers and Santa Claus, instead of the traditional horse-drawn troika, driven by Ded Moroz.
- Some trans-regional features can also be seen on old cards. However, on modern cards, there are clear reflections not only of trans-regional cultural influences but also of cultural globalisation.

Combinations of trans-regional and regional symbols and the cross-border transfer of national images are also seen in Christmas poetry. Often, poets describe Christmas scenes quite realistically but add some characteristic regional or national features.

- In Russian poetry, a typical example of this kind of transfer occurs in the poems of Joseph Brodsky and Boris Pasternak. Both poets portray the night, when the magi came to Christ following the Christmas Star as a cold, snowy night. This was an obvious transposition of conditions at Christmas in Russia to Palestinian



Bethlehem.

- The transposition of national images of Christmas is also found in German poetry. For instance, in the poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer *Weihnachten in Ajaccio* (Christmas in Ajaccio), there are descriptions of ripe oranges, blooming myrtle and shining sun, whereas the hero's dream is about white snowflakes.
- The scenery of Bethlehem seems very realistic in the poem by Russian poet Ivan Bunin "The Christmas Tree" whereas Alexander Blok's poems contain descriptions of sparkling snowy Christmas forest typical of Russia. Some of the scenes created by German poets are also very realistic. For instance, in Annette von Droste Hülshoff's poetry, the three magi are tanned by hot winds and walk among palms and camels. The German Christmas portrayed by Gustav Hermann Kletke, however, is windy, snowy and frosty.

It is a complicated challenge to compare Christmas music in different countries. It is reasonable to distinguish between different musical genres – liturgical music, professional sacred music, professional secular music and folk music - and to consider them separately.

If we compare Gregorian chants, the Christmas Oratorio by Johannes Sebastian Bach, and *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus* (Twenty Views of the Infant Jesus) by Olivier Messiaen, on the one hand, and the *Znamenny Chant* and the *All-Night Vigil* (Vespers) by Sergey Rachmaninov, Christmas Eve by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, the Christmas Tree by Vladimir Rebikov and traditional Russian *Kolyadka* songs, on the other hand, we may come to the following conclusions:

- Liturgical music does not include regionally different landscape im-

ages. Regional distinctions seem to be more pronounced in folk music. However, these musical genres have to be studied more carefully.

- It is easier to compare professional secular music. Landscape images can be clearly heard in Russian secular music devoted to Christmas. They are approximately the same as those in Russian poetry, including elements such as frosty nights, stars, and Christmas trees in warm and cosy houses.

In conclusion, therefore,

- Russian Christmas cards, poems and secular music bear distinct regional or national features characterised by obvious landscape symbols such as snow-covered plains, fir trees, heavy frost, night-time, stars, troikas, villages and cosy candle-lit houses full of the scent of conifer needles.
- Some of these symbols, such as



snow, fir trees, lights and villages are also present in German mental Christmas landscapes. However, views of churches and Christmas markets are only seen on German cards.

- The mental Christmas landscapes of both countries also contain universal or transfrontier biblical symbols, such as the baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the kings or magi, camels, the Christ child, the ox and the donkey, the manger, the cave and the Star of Bethlehem.

Specific public opinion polls may be one means of revealing shared and local Christmas symbols in different countries. The results of one such poll are given in the table below. Repre-

sentatives of nine countries – Austria, United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and France – took part. They were asked to name five major Christmas symbols. Overall, 29 different symbols were mentioned. They included both frequently repeated and rarely mentioned symbols.

Admittedly, the results of this poll, which was conducted by just one group of experts, are somewhat tentative. However, they do point to the regional diversity of mental Christmas images. Indeed, among the less frequently mentioned symbols,

which may reflect specific regional characteristics, there are some highly contrasting images such as grey rainy skies and stars. It can be supposed that if such polls were conducted more frequently on a more representative sample, they would be very informative.

In further studies, it would be reasonable to compare Christmas landscape images not only in Germany and in Russia but also in other large regions selected with due regard for their cultural and geographical identities, including Scandinavia, the plains of northern Europe, the Alps and the Mediterranean region. Subsequently, these large regions could be subdivided into smaller regions, particularly in

the Mediterranean region. The results of such an analysis of mental Christmas landscapes would show the similarities and differences between European regions in a new light and may be a key means of attaching identities to them.

Symbols of mental Christmas landscapes: frequency of occurrence in the answers to the poll, %

45 – 50 %	Christmas tree, snow
20 – 25 %	Lighted windows in houses, lighted churches, hills and mountains, Christmas markets
4 – 5 %	The peals of bells, villages, grey sky and rain, stars
1 – 2 %	Crowds in the countryside, fir trees, traffic jams, icy lakes, open landscapes, fields, horrible American songs on the radio, snow-covered paths

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Austria	Zentralverband der Kleingärtner und Siedler Österreichs	Simon-Wiesenthal-Gasse 2 A- 1020 WIEN	Tél. 0043/1-587 07 85 Fax. 0043/1-587 07 85 30 email: zvwien@kleingaertner.at Internet. www.kleingaertner.at
Belgium	National Verbond van Volkstuinen vzw/Ligue Nationale du Coin de Terre et du Foyer - Jardins Populaires	c/o Serge Dockier rue des Crênières 49 B-4210 Oteppe	Tél. 0032/498 373 907 email: serge.dockier@yahoo.fr
Denmark	Kolonihaveforbundet for Danmark	Frederikssundsvej 304 A DK - 2700 BRONSHOJ	Tél. 0045/3 828 8750 Fax. 0045/3 828 8350 email: info@kolonihave.dk Internet: www.kolonihave.dk
Finland	Suomen Siirtolapuutarhaliitto ry	Pengerkatu 9 B 39 SF - 00530 HELSINKI	Tél. 00358/ 9-763 155 Fax. 00358/ 9-763 125 email: sgarden@siirtolapuutarhaliitto.fi Internet: www.siirtolapuutarhaliitto.fi
France	Fédération Nationale des Jardins Familiaux et Collectifs	12, rue Félix Faure F - 75015 PARIS	Tél. 0033/ 1-45 40 40 45 Fax. 0033/ 1-45 40 78 90 email: j.clement@jardins-familiaux.asso.fr
Germany	Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde e.V.	Platanenallee 37 D - 14050 BERLIN	Tél. 0049/30-30 20 71-40/41 Fax.0049/30-30 20 71 39 email: bdg@kleingarten-bund.de Internet: kleingarten-bund.de
Great-Britain	The National Allotment Society	O'Dell House/Hunters Road GB - CORBY Northants NN17 5JE	Tél. 0044/ 1536 266 576 Fax. 0044/1536 264 509 email: natsoc@nsalg.org.uk Internet: www.nsalg.org.uk
Luxemburg	Ligue Luxembourgeoise du Coin de Terre et du Foyer	97, rue de Bonnevoie L - 1260 Luxembourg	Tél. 00 352/ 48 01 99 Fax. 00 352/40 97 98 email: liguctf@pt.lu Internet: www.ctf.lu
Norway	Norsk Kolonihageforbund	Torggata 10 N - 0181 OSLO	Tél. 0047/22-11 00 90 Fax. 0047/22-11 00 91 email: forbundet@kolonihager.no
The Netherlands	Algemeen Verbond van Volkstuinders Verenigen in Nederland	Vogelvlinderweg 50 NL - 3544 NJ UTRECHT	Tél. 0031/ 30 670 1331 Fax. 0031/ 30 670 0525 email: info.avvn.nl Internet: www.avvn.nl
Poland	Polski Związek Działkowców	Ul. Bobrowiecka 1 PL - 00728 WARSZAWA	Tél. 0048/ 22- 101 34 44 Fax.0048 /22- 101 34 60 email: prezespzd@pzd.pl Internet: www.dzialkowiec.com.pl
Slovakia	Slovenský Zväz Záhradkárov Republikový Výbor	Havlickova 34 SK - 817 02 BRATISLAVA	Tél. 00421/ 2-20 70 71 76 Fax. 00421/2-20 70 71 77 email: info@szz.eu.sk
Sweden	Koloniträdgårdsförbundet	Asögatan 149 S - 116 32 STOCKHOLM	Tél. 0046/ 8 556 930 80 Fax. 0046/ 8-640 38 98 email: kansli@koloni.org Internet: www.koloni.org
Switzerland	Schweizer Familiengärtnerverband	Sturzeneggstr. 23 CH - 9015 ST.GALLEN	Tél. 0041/ 71-311 27 19 email: waschaffner@bluewin.ch

Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux association sans but lucratif

Address: 20, rue de Bragance, L - 1255 Luxembourg

The Office online: www.jardins-familiaux.org

EXECUTIVE BOARD: Chris ZIJDEVELD (NL) President of the Office
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